

Human

VOL. 3

NO. 1

1998

Why "Engender" Environmental Education?

Brian Day

The answers that emerge from these pages may surprise you. Forget that gender is "hot." Look even beyond the quest for equity, vital as it is. The fact is that using a gender "lens" in environmental education and communication (EE&C) makes our efforts more effective.

Gender analysis helps us get more and better information about people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Again and again we've found that a gender component helps us design better programs that further both environmental protection and equity.

Western businesses acknowledge that diversity on corporate boards gives management a broader set of perspectives, and companies run better thanks to this input. This assumes a critical mass of the minority representatives (See "The Problem with Tokenism," p.3) The same is true of EE&C interventions.

But using gender analysis in a meaningful way entails more than disaggregation of data. Gender awareness plays a part in each step of research, planning, implementing, and evaluation.

Understanding gender roles

Integrating gender concerns starts with understanding gender roles. Then we can ask vital questions about the impact and equity of a new program. By changing how people do things, will men or women be more affected? Who will get more, or less, work? Who will get more or less money? Who will get more or less power or status? Who will get any new jobs? Who will lose jobs? What in fact constitutes equity in this situation? Can the

community assimilate these changes, and what will it take to ease the transition?

Consider GreenCOM's work in Egypt. Early on, we were invited to a small village where the *mesqa* – the irrigation ditch closest to the village – was clogged, nearly cutting off the flow of water. Our task was to motivate villagers to clear the *mesqa* using their own funds.

Consulting all involved

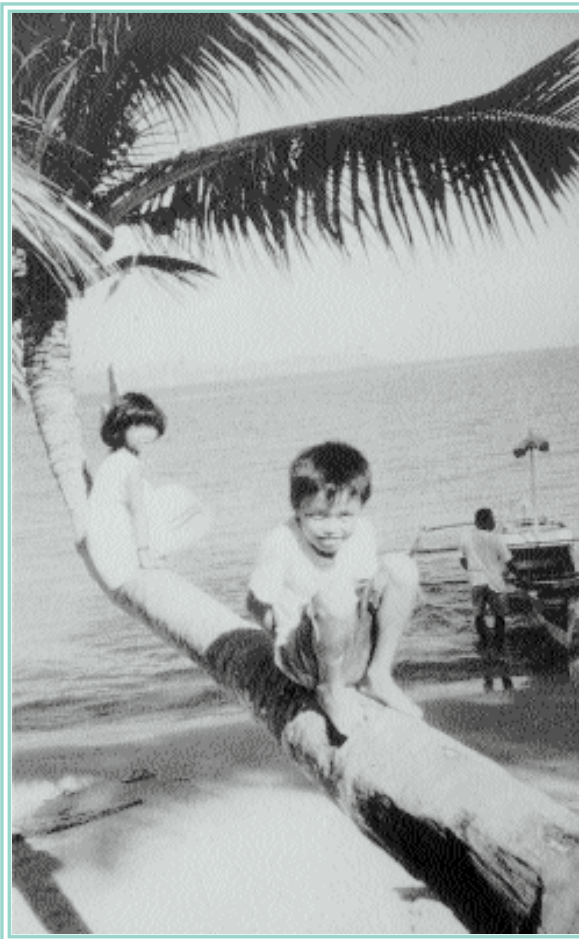
Normally only the men of the village would discuss a question involving irrigation. However we insisted on consulting women as well. That's how we discovered that it's a woman's role to deal with garbage. And the *mesqa* got clogged, it turned out, because that's where women threw the garbage. They did so not out of orneriness but because the village had neither a recycling program nor an official facility for garbage.

If irrigation is men's bailiwick, garbage is women's, and neither group consults the other about its business. Getting the *mesqa* cleaned up proved relatively simple in the short run. Keeping it clean in the long-run is another story; it required rethinking the entire issue of garbage.

An understanding of both gender roles led to a new policy at the Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources. For the first time, the Ministry now authorizes construction of a garbage facility

whenever improvements are made to the local *mesqa*.

It gives us a certain perspective to think that this tussle over garbage in the *mesqa* may well have gone on for thousands of years. Not to pat ourselves on the back, but only by consulting both men and women could we help sort out a solution that might actually work over the next millenium or two.



"Women Don't Fish"

Common wisdom in the Philippines says that women don't fish. So if you needed to figure out a communications strategy for coastal protection, you might be tempted to speak only with men. You'd be missing the boat. What follows is a cautionary tale from Betty C. Abregana, researcher and past president of Silliman University.

One early morning, along the beach, I asked a fisherman who was examining his boat if women ever go fishing with men. He replied, "No, women

bring bad luck." Later in the day, I held a focus group with seven women and asked if some of them go along with men to fish. Three of them said they go with men on fishing trips and spend long night hours at sea.

On the trips, the women told me, men kill time by drinking alcohol or sleeping. Women help ensure a good harvest by dissuading the men from getting drunk, keeping watch and waking men up when a likely catch appears. Women help

cast the net: they say they swing the net farther because they think of their debts. The women observed that men think of fishing as a means to buy rice, while women see it as providing money for rice and also sugar, laundry soap, milk, and their children's school allowance.

All women help prepare for fishing: they get oil and gas for the boat's engine, provide food and cigarettes for the crew, mend and ready the fish nets or hooks and lines. They negotiate with the local moneylender for credit if the family is short of cash. After the fishing trip, women put the fish

on ice, price the catch, deliver it to market, and select fish for home consumption. The women also say that men see the heavily damaged immediate environment as a lost cause, while women see it as a fragile being that needs continuing care.

It's clear that to get a useful picture, we need to consult both genders. Abregana's fishing story comes from *Let the Women Speak: Engendering Community-Based Resources Management*. Published by the Silliman University in 1997, *Let the Women Speak* features several cases of research on gender and natural resources in the Philippines.



Human Nature looks at ways that environmental education and communication (EE&C) affect the people who affect the earth. We hope to share innovative, practical ideas from around the world, link resources with those who can use them, and consider the education and communication implications of larger political, scientific, social, and cultural events.

Let's

Making a Case to the Camera in Nepal

An unusual meeting of the minds took place at a community forestry forum in Nepal in March when members of community forest user groups (CFUGs) spoke frankly to the Minister of Soil and Conservation and other high-level officials. The rural villagers from Rapti talked about forest encroachment, irrigation, soil erosion, theft, and corruption. They pressed forest officials on promises still unkept.

But most of the villagers weren't there—they made their case and even interviewed local officials in a community video letter (CVL) that GreenCOM sponsored.

Senior government officials lauded the forum for providing a rare opportunity for face-to-face dialogue with farmers and

other forest users. In fact, the Secretary of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation indicated that this was his first such meeting.

Prior to the forum, Kedar Sharma, a GreenCOM consultant, spent several months training a diverse group from the Rapti CFUG on investigative reporting, script writing, directing, and video production. The eight women and seven men who worked with him would otherwise rarely speak to each other. They represented Brahmins and Untouchables, Tharus and Nepalis, and adherents of various political leanings. Two CFUG members, a Nepali woman and a Tharu man, edited the letter in Kathmandu.

Sharma told participants, "The goal is

to get the story in your own language, without filtering, rather than having someone else translate the story for you and use their language. This is a democratic process, and a time to collectively recognize and express your problems."

Sharma knew he was breaking social barriers just by having the two genders and various groups in the same room. What he hadn't counted on was what happened as women broke out of their restrictive gender roles to speak in public, express opinions in the presence of men, and garner authority by carrying a video camera. The article below is Sharma's account of one woman's transformation and the evolution of his own view of gender relations.

Community Video and Empowerment: A Personal View

Kedar Sharma

When I first met Laxmi Yogi, at the start of the Community Video Letter (CVL) process, I thought she was part of the social elite. The main reason was her husband's status, which generally determines a woman's status in Nepal. One of the influential intellectuals of Uchanimbu village where they live, Laxmi's husband teaches in the local

ideas on better ways of raising buffaloes since I knew she had a buffalo and sold its milk.

Laxmi spoke a few sentences, haltingly. I did not see a sense of satisfaction in her face, which participants usually show after expressing opinions or ideas they consider important.

After everyone had had a turn, I asked Laxmi to say something on any subject she wished. This time she told a story of her own.

Laxmi said that she was just 16 years old when she got married. After marriage, it became difficult for her to study because of the many household chores. She had dreamt of being a school teacher, however, so she worked hard and

passed the final examination. Said Laxmi, "I passed the tough exam along with my brother-in-law, but I was not given a chance to go to college. This is the biggest regret of my life."

This was an eye opener for me. I realized that perhaps I was too occupied with forestry issues at the expense of other human questions. I thanked Laxmi for her openness and asked others to tell us such stories.

From our story-telling ses-

sions, I realized that no matter how privileged she seemed, Laxmi was actually marginalized in a patriarchal and feudal society. I realized that she felt gender discrimination keenly, and held a deep wish to express her ideas and

invited to a small ceremony organized by women of a neighboring village. When she arrived, Laxmi met with the organizers and requested a chance to speak. She was invited to the podium after a while and shared a few

...in her interview at the end of the CVL process, Laxmi told me it had 'lifted up her head.'



Filming the Rapti Community Video Letter

high school. Laxmi herself, with a high school education, is among the most educated women of Uchanimbu and a volunteer health worker in the local family planning clinic.

I soon discovered I was wrong. During the CVL process, we held story sessions to help participants get used to discussing ideas with each other and speaking in front of a camera.

It was Laxmi's turn. I asked her to tell us about her

prove herself as strong as a man.

We encouraged not only Laxmi but all the women participants to speak, and they were doing quite well. Another day Laxmi said that the main problem of rural women is the lack of opportunity available for them to participate in public or social issues. She added that even though some women were "given" posts in different committees, they were not encouraged to participate actively, nor were they given executive positions. Their participation is largely limited to tokenism, she said. (See "The Problem with Tokenism," p.3.)

I found it very meaningful to hear this from a rural woman. Laxmi's very innocent way of expression led me to believe that those were her own ideas, not those of outsiders.

Two weeks later, we were all

words about the disadvantaged situation of women and her ideas for improvements.

After finishing, she told me that this was the second public speech in her life. The first had been the week before in a Village Development Committee meeting. She said that she dared to speak in public after the CVL started in her village.

When I was wrapping up the CVL, I interviewed all the participants about the process.

I felt honored when Laxmi told me, in her interview at the end of the CVL process, that the process had "lifted up her head". Later I found out that the community forest users' group started a "Communication Subcommittee" to produce a regular publication on local issues and events. The sub-committee's coordinator is none other than Laxmi Yogi.

The Problem with Tokenism

Mona Grieser

"Women's problems are not taken seriously," says Laxmi Yogi, a Nepali woman and member of a community forest user group (see "Community Video and Empowerment," p.2). "They don't listen to us," echoes a woman member of a community forest group in the Philippines.

Yet nearly everywhere, government policy specifically calls for inclusion of women in user groups, village development committees and indeed most areas of group decision-making. So why are women complaining?

The work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter, professor at the Harvard Business School, points toward an explanation. Kanter argues that the proportionality of a group has a great deal to do with how men and women behave and see each other. She defines four types of groups for the purpose of understanding majority-minority interactions: uniform, skewed, tilted and balanced. Uniform groups are just that. Groups in which one group predominates in the proportion of about 85:15 can be called skewed. The smaller constituency in a skewed group tend to be treated as stereotypes of their gender or ethnicity rather than as individuals--tokens, in other words. Both the individuals and their views tend to be ignored. In tilted groups of about 65:35, the smaller group becomes a minority, who can make themselves heard as an alliance. In balanced groups of 55:45 or 50:50, individuals feel freer to be themselves and are viewed as contributing members rather than stereotypes.

This analysis suggests why, despite years of efforts to democratize institutions, women and other under-represented groups still feel marginalized. The proportion of women on these committees remains below 35 %, the point at which minorities in a group can form alliances among themselves and have their issues taken seriously.



Good Intentions, Poor Results: Garbage Collection in Quito Shantytowns

Orlando Hernandez

We see it time and time again: a sorely needed program, designed with high hopes – failing.

In the case of Quito, GreenCOM was called in to figure out why the recycling program organized by the city – launched with initial success – was being ignored by the majority of residents after a matter of months.

The background: In poor neighborhoods with inadequate municipal waste collection services, garbage was accumulating in ravines and empty lots.

Alarmed by the health hazard, an environmentalist on the city council devised a waste collection program with the community. After his assistant visited the neighborhoods, the official decided the best option was to organize neighbors into waste collection teams. Calling them "micro-enterprises," he managed to get municipal funding for salaries and truck rental.

Microenterprises collected waste house by house through the small alleys, wet waste, bathroom waste, and recyclables on different days of the week. Proceeds from reselling bottles and the like – plus an equivalent amount matched by the city – went to a neighborhood fund for development activities. Some neighborhood committees used the fund for street signs, others for green areas or playgrounds.

Strong start

Enthusiasm ran high in the early days of the program. Over time, however, opposition arose. Collectors began to complain that neighbors were becoming uncooperative and mixing different types of waste. By the time compliance dropped to a third, the municipality decided to promote the program through a communications campaign – and called in GreenCOM.

GreenCOM conducted a study to explore incentives and disincentives to recycling, and to examine residents' knowl-

edge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding recycling and separating household waste by type. Early on we discovered that recycling was not at all new

tion to the municipal program. Suspicious of where the money went, he complained that waste collection was most reliable on Tuesday recycling day. "On

Enthusiasm ran high in the early days of the program. Over time, however, opposition arose.

in the neighborhoods. For years, in fact, residents had been separating their waste and selling recyclable materials to neighborhood "scavengers" who earned their living reselling the items to industry. The scavengers did not, however, accept as wide a variety of items as the municipal recyclers. Women typically separated waste and kept the income from selling items to scavengers.

Beatriz typifies the attitudes and practices of women residents regarding waste. A long-time resident of Solanda, a working-class neighborhood in Southern Quito, Beatriz

contends that "in my house there is no waste." She gives leftovers to beggars and vegetable peels to domestic animals. She would sell newspapers, cardboard and bottles to scavengers. When the municipal waste recycling program started, she



In the streets of Quito

supported it, enjoying the idea of generating funds for local improvement projects, despite the loss of family income. After some months, however, she began to drop out of the program.

Beatriz told us that over time the loss of income began to rankle, particularly as she did not know how much the neighborhood committee was earning from municipal recycling, nor where the funds were actually going. Beatriz' husband was more outspoken in his opposi-

Tuesdays they are always here," he said, "but on other days we can never be sure if they'll show up or not."

In this case of good intentions and poor results, GreenCOM recommended that all stakeholders, including traditional scavengers, be consulted in the redesign of city waste services, and that communications efforts target men and women separately.

Messages for both genders

Chances are the municipality could boost participation in waste collection services simply by making service more

regular and by helping scavengers collect and sell a wider range of products.

Furthermore, the research showed that men and women responded to different arguments for recycling, and that they see and attend to different media. Therefore a future communications effort would be most effective if it produced messages for both men and women separately, through the formal and informal media they each use.

Resources Human Nature

Many excellent resources on gender analysis now exist. However, few deal specifically with gender and EE&C. Nevertheless, even some of the more general books and training materials can be helpful. Since a plethora can be perused or ordered from cyberspace, here are a few favorites.

Genderhood is Global

Gender and Sustainable Rural Development is a real find--a compendium of approximately eighty books, papers, and articles on sustainable development through a gender lens. It contains little-known gems from all over. For instance: *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective*, by Florence Abena Dolphyne. "The Gender Dimension in Environment and Development Policy: The Southeast Asian Experience," by V. Wee shows how current economic policies and environmental issues fuel the feminisation of poverty. *Fishers, Traders, Farmers, Wives: the Life Stories of Ten Women in a Fishing Village*, by Jeanne Frances I. Illo and Jaime B. Polo looks at the importance of women's work in agriculture and fisheries in the Philippines and how the barriers between "men's work" and "women's work" are breaking down. <http://xel.stfx.ca/coady-library/health.htm>

A Three Pointed Starfish

An ecology-oriented site, [Starfish](#) provides three

searchable databases: Biblio, Courses and Methods. Perhaps most interesting is Courses containing dozens of curricula on environmental topics. Two stand out for gender issues: "Gender and the Environment" from the University of Saskatchewan and "Ecofeminism: Women's Studies and Environmental Ethics" from the University of Texas. In the Biblio database, articles such as "Gender Benders: Are Environmental 'Hormones' Emasculating Wildlife?" and "That Feminine Touch" by Janet Raloff look at how exposure to pesticides seem to be exerting a "feminizing influence" on wildlife. <http://www.starfish.org>

Platform for Equality

A meaty site maintained by USIA, [Resources for Women](#) is designed to promote the Platform for Action from the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Headings include Poverty, the Environment, Education and Training, Health, and the Girl-Child; each features the pertinent passage from the Platform for Action as well as interesting links. For instance, Women and Education will take you to the San Francisco-based [Education Action Guide for Girls](#), a network of professionals and academics working for equal educational opportunities for women worldwide. If academia is your interest, check out [The Artemis Guide to Women's Studies](#)

[Programs in the U.S.](#), which links to more than 200 university-level programs. The [National Women's History Project](#) can quiz you on women's history, offer you ideas for Women's History Month, and provide classroom activities for teachers and students. <http://www.usia.gov/topical/global/women/woman.htm>

WEED it Out

WE International (formerly Women and Environments Magazine) takes a critical look at women and technology and public health as well as environment. It's basically a magazine published by WEED -- Women and Environments Education and Development Foundation. <http://www.web.net/~weed/main.html>

Gender Manual Storehouse

[Lutheran World Relief](#) has a good database of works concerning gender and development analysis. Although the database will not provide you with hard copies of the texts, it will tell you how to order them. Resources include the OXFAM Gender Training Manual, several books on gender sensitive indicators by the Canadian International Development Agency, and USAID's Gender Analysis Tool Kit. There are also extensive links to similar organizations throughout the world. <http://www.lwr.org/gad/RESOURCE.HTML>

All About Eve

[The Sustainable](#)

[Development Research Institute](#) offers a rather mind-boggling, annotated bibliography on gender issues. It's divided into sections on community, earth, power, spirituality, sustainable livelihoods, tools for change and resources.

Entries include articles from many perspectives, ranging from "Women, Violence, and Social Change" to "Feminism, Animals and Science: the Naming of the Shrew." The 100-point, feminist policy agenda is worth scanning. <http://www.sdri.ubc.ca/gender>

Women and Gender Too

This USAID site links to both large international organizations -- [UNESCO](#), [UNICEF](#), and the [United Nations Development Fund](#) for Women -- and smaller centers such as the [Institute for Research on Women and Gender](#) at Stanford University. It has a wealth of material on Africa as well as business opportunities and advice for women, and several mailing lists. The [African Women's Global Network](#) (AWOGNET) provides information on the First Conference of Women and Technology and various gender research initiatives. <http://www.info.usaid.gov/regions/afr/abic/widsites.htm>

Out of Africa

[EcoNews Africa](#) analyzes international development and environment issues from an African perspective. Articles discuss issues such as food sufficiency, international development

and the ADB (African Development Bank), and use of hybrid crops. It also links to the [Beijing UN World Conference on Women](#), the [UNDP](#) and others. <http://www.web.apc.org/~econews/>

WomensNet

[WomensNet](#) was set up to provide South African women resources for social action. As well as pages on health, violence against women, and women in government, it offers links to such sites as the [Africa Policy Information Center](#): [Women's Rights in Africa Page](#). <http://womensnet.org.za/>

The World Bank Group

Gender resources don't have their own page here but will pop up in a site search on "gender." You'll find the World Bank's [Gender Training Manuals](#), [Gender Country Studies](#), and various reports and other publications. The [Gender Training](#) site gives suggestions on how to organize gender workshops in the workplace. The search will also provide a list of links to outside organizations' websites such as: [Amnesty International](#), [Women of Africa](#), and the [4th World Conference on Women in Beijing](#). The [Women of Africa](#) site in turn provides an impressive link list on topics from female circumcision to women's publications to student websites. Amnesty International's Human Rights Are Women's Right's page provides access to its reports on women's rights

Human Nature

Human Nature is published in English, French and Spanish by the Environmental Education and Communication (GreenCOM) Project. Readers are encouraged to share the material in this newsletter through photocopying, excerpting, posting to a bulletin board (cork or electronic!) or through other means. Please cite *Human Nature* if material is published, and send a copy of the piece to this address.

We welcome comments about this issue, as well as news about your environmental education or communication activity. Please send letters to the editor, articles, and other information to:

Editor, Human Nature
GreenCOM
1255 23rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037 USA
Fax: (202) 884-8997
Telephone: (202) 884-8899
Email: <greencom@aed.org>
Internet: <http://www.info.usaid.gov/environment/greencom>
Searchable Resource Library:
<http://eelink.umich.edu/RESLIB/greencom.html>

Editor: Carole Dougliis
Layout: Alice de Remond du Chelas

Contacts for each cooperative organization in the United States:
GreenCOM Director
Brian Day (202) 884-8897
IUCN-DC Executive Director
Scott Hajost (202) 797-6594
WRI Environmental Education Director
Mary Paden (202) 662-2573



GreenCOM
Environmental Education and Communication Project

IUCN
The World Conservation Union



World Resources Institute



Printed on recycled paper

The Environmental Education and Communication (GreenCOM) Project is jointly funded and managed by the Center for the Environment, the Center for Human Capacity Development, and the Office for Women in Development of the Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research at the United States Agency for International Development and by USAID Missions at collaborating sites. Technical Services are provided by the Academy for Educational Development under Contracts No. PCE-5839-C-00-3068-00 and No. PCE-5839-Q-00-3069-00. Subcontractors are Chemonics International, Global Vision, Inc., North American Association for Environmental Education, the Futures Group, Porter/Novelli, PRC Environmental Management, Inc., and World Resources Institute.